

CONTACT:

‘TIS THE SEASON TO RECYCLE

The holiday season is a magical time, filled with friends, family, celebration and gift-giving. Unfortunately, this beautiful time of year has put a damper on our earth, causing waste due to over-consumption. In the United States an additional five million tons of waste is generated between Thanksgiving and New Years! This holiday season, Massachusetts residents will buy an estimated: 70 million greeting cards, one million cut evergreen trees, and \$10 worth of packing materials and wrapping paper for every \$100 spent on gifts.

As you make room for new holiday treasures, consider donating old, unwanted toys, electronics, and clothing rather than throwing them away. Charities collect a wide variety of items, from used books to dishware. What is useless to one person may be priceless to someone else.

And don't forget that many items can be recycled, so be sure to recycle mail order catalogs, cardboard boxes, as well as food and beverage containers.

There are other ways to reduce waste during the holidays. Try out some of these ideas and create new holiday traditions this year that will help protect the environment this season and for generations to come.

Shop smart. Keep non-recyclable packaging to a minimum, buy in bulk, and choose items with recycled content.

Give time. Yours or someone else's, such as a handmade gift, music lessons, a trip to a ball park, babysitting services, or event tickets.

Go online. Send electronic greetings instead of traditional paper cards. Shop online to reduce car trips to brick and mortar buildings.

Try green gifts. Give hand-knit items, plants, fruit baskets, bird feeders and seeds, family memberships, or donations to favorite charities.

Reuse. Decorations, wrapping paper, packaging, shipping materials, foil, containers and paper can have multiple uses. With a little imagination, practically anything can be reused. Tap your inner Martha Steward when wrapping gifts. Try using fabric or children's artwork. Gift bags are beautiful, can be reused over several years and help the wrapping-impaired. Save Styrofoam packing peanuts and bubble wrap to reuse for shipping gifts next year. Or, donate packing materials to shipping companies.

DECEMBER ARTICLE

Don't forget to recycle and compost. Because we entertain more, we have more empty food and beverage containers and other recyclables in the household. If you have more than your bins can hold, use a cardboard box to hold the extras. Don't forget that aluminum foil can be recycled along with bottles and cans. Just ball it up and toss it in the recycle bin. Compost vegetable and fruit peelings.

Rent the good stuff. Instead of buying disposable plates, forks, napkins and tablecloths, rent them from a party store. They have a variety of china, silver and linen to rent and all the items will look great on your table. Rental fees are nominal and you won't even have to clean them before you return them!

Skip the lights. Plenty of joyful tree and outdoor decorating can be done without plugging in. String popcorn and cranberries to decorate shrubs and trees, or try hardy, reusable garlands. If you choose to decorate with lights, use energy-efficient ones and remember to turn them off.

Mulch it. Today's dead Christmas tree is mulch for tomorrow. If you opt for a cut Christmas tree, be sure to "recycle" it afterward by checking with your hometown for their pickup schedule. Or, do it yourself. Evergreen branches, swags and wreaths make excellent winter protection in the garden. Use the trunk as a trellis or part of a garden structure for a rustic look. If you have a chipper, run it through and add the material to a compost mixture.

With a little effort, we can all make this holiday season happy and healthy for ourselves, our families, and the environment.

-###-